Summary

This document summarizes key findings and recommendations from the Idaho Reading Report by Drs. Kristi Santi and David Francis. The full report is a review of the Idaho Reading Inventory (IRI) and the current practices in Idaho related to the assessment of early reading and the identification of children at risk for reading failure.

Purpose of Assessment. Review of the IRI found that schools use the assessment for different purposes and that some of these purposes may conflict with one another.

Identified Uses:

- Evaluate teacher performance while also using the test to identify children at-risk for reading problems.
- Classify students with regards to reading proficiency and to support decisions regarding the placement of students into reading intervention.

Legislative Intent. The legislative intent behind the IRI was stated to provide teachers with information relevant to student reading skills and to use the results to assist in the identification of students needing early reading intervention. The use of the IRI for teachers conflicts with this legislative purpose.

Administration and Scoring of IRI. Generally IRI administration and scoring procedures are consistent with those used for other CBM assessments with some concerns noted.

Concerns.

- *Lack of comprehension questions*. The IRI does not administer comprehension questions and test administration procedures have not been adapted to instruct students to read for comprehension. The validity of fluency-based assessments is weakened when students are allowed to increase reading speed without regard for the impact on comprehension.
- *Single raw score*. Reliance on a single raw score taken as the median score from three one-minute readings without regard for differences across the three reading probes in a given grade, and the reliance on a single set of forms at each grade are concerns. A possible solution would be to equate passages and develop multiple probe sets per grade.
- *Interpretation*. The interpretation of IRI scores in terms of state standards for reading proficiency was *not* supported. The lack of a standard setting process to derive the performance level descriptors was an area of concern given the desire to classify students into proficiency categories.

Adequacy of IRI Benchmarks. The current proficiency indicators were reviewed and compared to three other nationally recognized norms for similar assessments (see pages 22-25 in full report). For the most part, the IRI proficiency indicators are consistent with norms from similar assessments with two exceptions noted.

Concerns.

- Samples used in reports were not representative of the entire Idaho school populations.

- Only a single form exists for each grade level confounding growth with potential practice effects and narrowing the scope of assessment.

Relation to Common Core State Standards.

- The IRI would match the expectations set forth in the CCSS and could be used in conjunction with CCSS assessments focused on early reading development.
    - Why: The CCSS does not challenge or alter the foundational skills sequence that underlies early reading development.

Psychometric Data. The reviewers raised significant concerns regarding the limited psychometric data supporting the IRI.

Specific Issues. Technical documents submitted to the reviewers contained scant data from the development process.

- Missing entirely were studies equating test forms or demonstrating comparability of the test across protected subgroups of students.
- Validity data were quite limited as were data on reliability.
- No systematic study of the IRI and its use to predict performance on the State of Idaho's standards based assessment was undertaken by the test developer, and few studies have been undertaken by the state or individual districts subsequent to test's adoption.
    - Most of what is known about the performance characteristics of the test comes from studies undertaken by ISDE or by individual districts, especially in the critical domain of validity of the test for identifying children at-risk for poor performance on the ISDE standards based assessment.

Training Procedures.

- Standardized proctor training would utilize videos to highlight proper administration and scoring techniques as well as to highlight the kinds of problems that occur during routine test administrations.
- Standardized training could require proctors to submit video taped test-administrations in order to be certified to administer the IRI as part of the state's assessment program.

Next Steps.

- *Screener*. Yes. However, consideration should be given to modifying test administration guidelines to focus students' attention on reading for comprehension.
- *Systematic Data Collection*. It is recommended that the ISDE engage the local districts in systematic data collection to support investigation into the reliability and validity of test based decisions.
- *Purpose*. ISDE and the IRI Steering Committee must also specifically address the question of the key purpose(s) for which the IRI is to be used and consider supplementing the IRI to addresses those purposes for assessment that are not well-matched to the IRI.
    - Need a diagnostic assessment.
        - There is a clear need for broader adoption of standardized diagnostic testing for students who fail the IRI screen in order to inform instructional decisions regarding intervention as well as a need for progress monitoring assessments for students in Tier 2 and 3 intervention.

- Critically evaluate the list of assessments from page 25 of the full report, as well as other reliable measures that may not be included on the list.

Final Thoughts. The need for early reading assessments is not diminished by the adoption of the CCSS. The assessments provided through the CCSS can aid in the screening of students, as well as in guiding instructional decisions and monitoring student progress. However, it is incumbent on ISDE and the IRI Steering Committee to integrate the various components into a coherent assessment system and to monitor the performance characteristics of that system, and continuously adapt it to maintain optimal performance.